

Nicholas J. Watkins

DESIGN RESEARCHER EXPOSING INSIGHTS THAT INSPIRE OPPORTUNITIES

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About Me

I am an inquisitive, purpose-driven, and team-oriented design researcher who leads and delivers projects with creativity, inclusivity, humility, and trustworthiness earned through a commitment to quality and learning. I lead teams on global, national, and client-specific projects and am proud to be an active collaborator and contributor on these and other efforts. To me, whether generative or evaluative, design research informs and inspires design by exposing insights that frame unseen opportunities and prompt creative thinking.

Interdisciplinary Education

Certificate in AI and Machine Learning, October 2023 to present.

Michigan State University

- Six-month course on the latest AI and machine learning techniques.

Certificate in Applied Data Science, January 2019 to May 2019.

Columbia University Executive Education | Engineering

- Four-month course on data science techniques.

Ph.D., Social and Cultural Factors in Design, 2006.

School of Architecture and Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- Dissertation Title: The psychological effect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Vietnam War combat veterans' post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms

B.Sc. in Psychology, 2001

Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- Emphasis in environmental psychology with field and laboratory research on natural resources and healthcare, behavioral health, retail, and leisure settings

B.A., Anthropology, 2001

Department of Anthropology University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- Award-winning senior honors ethnography of the practices and worship settings of Evangelical Catholics

Experience

Gensler

Global Health Sector Research Lead, June – June 2020 to November 2023

- Primary point of contact for design research on health and well-being across the firm and with partners
- Partnered with other firm leadership to drive design research milestones that grew business intelligence service offerings
- Orchestrated and maintained business development that attracted new clients to the organization for large design projects and portfolio-wide design research
- Conceived, managed, and executed on the firm's international survey studies
- Led applied mixed methods research for clients
- Advised on data platform strategy and data governance

- Published and presented findings within industry and scientific, refereed venues
- Garnered recognition for the organization with research project delivery and insights acknowledged with top honors by international design research organizations *Performance Analytics Manager*, June – June 2017 to June 2020
- Primary point of contact for design research quality for efforts across all market sectors
- Initiated best practice design research protocols for research quality including for the legacy Gensler Workplace Survey
- Drove the development of business intelligence solutions across the organization's service offerings
- Integrated AI, machine learning, IoT, simulation, predictive analytics, and video ethnography with client project delivery and the firm's international survey studies
- Co-managed 40+ internal and year-long research grants

EwingCole, *Director of Research*, 2013 to 2017

- Primary point of contact for design research across the firm and with outside partners
- Drove the development of business intelligence solutions across the organization's service offerings
- Integrated behavioral observation, IoT, simulation, predictive analytics, and video ethnography with client project delivery
- Published and presented findings within industry and scientific, refereed venues
- Garnered acclaim for the organization with research project delivery and insights recognized with top honors by international design research and healthcare design organizations
- Taught healthcare design research for the New York School of Interior Design graduate program

HOK, *Director of Research*, 2007 to 2013

- Primary point of contact for design research across the firm and outside partners with an emphasis on healthcare
- Drove the development of business intelligence solutions across the organization's service offerings
- Integrated behavioral observation, simulation, and predictive analytics with client project delivery
- Developed a patented product
- Recipient of a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant
- Published and presented findings within industry and scientific, refereed venues
- Taught healthcare design research for the New York School of Interior Design graduate program

Cannon Design, *Director of Research*, 2006 to 2007

- Primary point of contact for design research across the firm and outside partners with an emphasis on healthcare
- Integrated self-report methods and predictive analytics with client project delivery
- Published and presented findings within industry and scientific, refereed venues

Select Publications and Presentations

- Lustgarten, E., Cratty, J., & Watkins N. (Fall, 2023). The measurable impact of space and design on laboratory research scientist experience and productivity: Results from Gensler's Nationwide WPIx Labs Survey. Tradeline Space Strategies 2023.
- Duffy Day, T., Donovan, S., Song, S., Pittman, T., and Watkins, N. (2023). The future of environments for aging. In F. Ferdous and E. Roberts (Eds.), Redesigning the future of long-term care settings for older adults: Springer.
- Watkins, N. & Sellers, K. (2023). Strategies for research in healthcare settings: Challenges and opportunities. In A. Devlin (Ed.), Hindsight 20/20: Learning from a 2020 national study of the outpatient experience.
- Smith, C., Crispino, J., & Watkins, N. (2023) How research can inform healthcare real estate development. Healthcare Design Magazine.
- Watkins, N., (2019). (Love them or hate them) contemporary open plan offices as the progenitors of the future workplace. Corporate Real Estate Journal.
- Watkins, N. & Prince, T. (2015). Building What Matters - Enhancing Patient Experience Through Facility Projects. Cleveland Clinic Patient Experience Summit.
- Watkins, N., Cole, F., & Weidemann, S. (2010). The war memorial as healing environment: The psychological effect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Vietnam War combat veterans' post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Environment & Behavior, 42: 351-375.
- Anthony, K.H., and Watkins, N. (2009). A legacy of firsts: African Americans in architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In V. Burton and D. O'Brien (Eds.), Remembering Brown at fifty: The University of Illinois commemorates Brown v. Board of Education. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Watkins, N., (2008). Memorials, Memory, and Health: How Memorials Impact Recovery from Trauma and Illness.

Select Awards and Recognitions

- EDRA Certificate of Research Excellence, Merit: The Outpatient Experience Index: A National Study of American Outpatient Consumers' Experiences of Outpatient Care Facilities
- EDRA Certificate of Research Excellence: Learning and Re-Learning: The Impact of the Pandemic on People, Work, and the Future of Workplace
- American Institute of Architects (AIA), Large Firm Roundtable, Research Advisor
- The Masonry Institute and AIA Michigan Design Award. 1st Battalion/24th Marines Regimental Memorial
- Center for Health Design (CHD), Conference Committee
- EDRA Certificate of Research Excellence: Good Design is Good for Loyalty – Findings and Implications from a Cleveland Clinic Multi-Hospital Post Occupancy Investigation
- Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) Board Member and Chair
- Health Environmental Research & Design (HERD), Editorial Review Board EDRA Certificate of Research Excellence: Saint Mary's School, Sarah Graham Graham Kenan Library, Pre-and Post-Occupancy Study
- The HCD 10
- Platinum 2011 Award for Design Excellence Healthcare Design Magazine 2010 Platinum Product
- Human Dimensions of Environmental Systems (HDES) Fellow
- National Institutes of Health, Health in Buildings Roundtable (HiBR)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant (\$2,800,000), Co-Principal Investigator
- Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society
- Patricia O' Brien Award for superior senior honors thesis

Skills

Microsoft Office Suite, Python, SPSS, R, MPlus, Tensorflow, Qualtrics, Figma, InDesign, Miro, Dedoose, and all virtual collaboration platforms